

Guillaume Postel and the Syriac Gospels of Athanasius Kircher*

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One of the many treasures of the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, is the manuscript of the Gospels written in Syriac in the year 945.¹ This rare and beautiful codex was the property of the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher, who gave his "most dear and precious" book to Duke August the Younger of Braunschweig-Lüneburg as an ornament for his most famous library.² Duke August (1579–1666) was known as a wonder in his age because among pious rulers he was the most learned, and among men of greatest learning, he was the most pious. For thirty years he studied all branches of learning, and his devotion to political life is witnessed by thirty volumes of correspondence. Among his writings were books on the game of chess and on cryptography. Most important for posterity is his library at Wolfenbüttel, which contains one of the largest collections of Bibles in Europe.

Since both Duke August and Father Kircher were polymaths and bibliophiles, and both were interested in language and cryptography, the basis of their relationship was surely intellectual and surmounted

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¹The Syriac Gospels are found in the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, ms. 3.1.300. Aug. fol. The bookplate has an engraving of Athanasius Kircher and the words "Athanasius Kirchervs Fuldensis e Societate Iesu Anno Aetatis LIII." There is some discrepancy about the date of this codex; in Kircher's dedication he writes that the ms. was transcribed 721 years before (i.e. before 1666), which would be 945 A.D.; however, in an explanatory letter he states that it was written 745 years before, that is, in 921 A.D. The manuscript was evidently edited in 945 A.D. See *infra*. See also *Die Handschriften der Herzoglichen Bibliothek zu Wolfenbüttel*, ed. Otto von Heinemann (Wolfenbüttel, 1890) Zweite Abtheilung, Die Augusteischen Handschriften, I, 186–88, no. 2045.

²This famous library was founded in 1572 and was named after Duke August the Younger, whose scholarship helped to shape the collections. At the time of his death in 1666 the library was conceivably one of the largest libraries in Europe.

the religious quarrels of the day. Duke August faced the disorders of the Thirty Years War by setting his household in order. As he devoted himself to cataloguing his books, so he set in order the schools, courts and churches of his land. The central study which supported this regime of order in all aspects was the Gospels which he translated himself. For such a prince Athanasius Kircher's gift of the Syriac Gospels would be most appropriate. Kircher's gift could also be viewed as a particular paradigm for religious harmony which was lacking in general in the German states during this period. Since the Duke was an avid collector of Bibles, the gift of the Syriac Gospels would surely be a positive factor in Protestant-Catholic relations.³

Two interesting documents precede the Syriac text of the Gospels. First is the dedication to the Duke written by Father Kircher. The dedicatory letter is as follows:

To the most Serene Prince of the Holy Roman Empire, August, Duke of Braunschweig and Lüneburg, I, the underscribed, as an ornament of his most famous library, and in gratitude for so many kindnesses demonstrated toward me, offer, dedicate, and consecrate with deep and heartfelt affection this rare and most ancient text of the four Gospels written seven hundred twenty one years ago in the Syriac language in the character which they call Estranghelo.

Your most humble and devoted servant,

Athanasius Kircher, S.J.

Rome, 19 March in the year 1666.⁴

The second document is an excerpt of a letter written by Father Kircher from Rome on 19 March, 1666, the same day on which he wrote the dedicatory epistle.⁵ In this letter the Jesuit wrote of the great value of the manuscript and described its contents and appearance. He also noted that at the end of the text there were comments, translated from Syriac into Latin, about the history of the text and its copyist. Significant for our consideration is Kircher's statement that

³For a concise account of the Duke's life see the article, "August der Jüngere" in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (Leipzig, 1875), I, 660-63.

⁴"Hoc opus 4 Euangeliorum rarum et antiquissimum in syriaca lingua caractere quem Estranghelo uocant, ante annos 721 constrictum, Ego infrascriptus Serenissimo Sacri Romani Imperii Principi AVGUSTO Duci Brunswicensi et Lunaeburgensi in celeberrimae Bibliothecae suae ornamentum, nec non ad gratitudinem pro tot in me collatis beneficiis contestandam corde intimo affectu offero, dico, consecro. Romae Anno 1666. 19 Martii Humillimus et devotissimus seruus Athanasius Kircherus. SJ." This dedication is placed above the bookplate which contains an engraved likeness of Athanasius Kircher.

⁵This letter is on the first page preceding the Syriac text.

the Syriac Gospels which he is presenting to Duke August conform everywhere to the Syriac text printed by Christophe Plantin in his Royal Bible, which is the eight volume Polyglot Bible of 1571–72.⁶ The abridgement of Kircher's letter is as follows:

Extract from the letter of the Reverend Father Athanasius Kircher, dated from Rome on 19 March, 1666.

To your Serene Highness I send this which is more dear and precious to me than any other thing—the most rare and most ancient codex of the four Gospels of Christ in the Syriac language, in the character which they call Estranghelo, written seven hundred forty-five years ago, as the inscription at the end of the book shows. In addition to the four Gospels the manuscript contains several brief glosses in the margins written in the Syriac language but in Arabic letters. At the end of the leaves one will almost always find the names of the Evangelists written in red; by this they are indicating in the preparation of the texts at hand their agreement and harmony. We have placed the individual Chapters in their order like the customary arrangement and division of Chapters in the Latin Gospels so that the reader will not waste time in finding them. We have also supplied the missing parts of the Gospel according to John at the end of the codex. After these follow the Indexes which explain at which season, day, and feasts the Gospels ought to be read. Also mentioned above, the codex was written in the Syriac language which was in common use in all of Palestine at the time of Christ. Therefore, whoever knows Hebrew will learn this language without difficulty in a short time, especially if he has been trained in Chaldean, which they call Targumica, since Chaldean and Syriac differ only in character. Then, in order that there be no other obstacle for reading the codex, let the reader practice reading in the Estrangelitic character, which differs hardly at all from Syriac. To facilitate this, I have decided to place the alphabet at this point. [The Syriac alphabet appears in the original text.] Next the Gospel text conforms everywhere to the text which is employed in the Plantin

⁶For a concise account of the publication of the Plantin Polyglot Bible, see B. Rekkers, *Benito Arias Montano (1527–1598)* (Leiden, 1972), pp. 45–69. Rekkers, p. 52, points out that the censors of Louvain and Paris had made their corrections by 1570, but that the work was not completed until the end of 1571. There followed problems concerning Papal approval, however. Rekkers (pp. 54–55) notes: “It was an irony of fate that this monument of the Counter-Reformation should be so entirely opposed, in nature and in spirit, to the principles of Trent. Almost all its collaborators were on the borderline between orthodoxy and heresy. The irony is intensified by the fact that this Bible was set up on a press originally established to print the works of the Spiritualist prophet Henry Niclaes, and printed with Hebrew type supplied by the Protestant exile Bomberghe.” After prolonged negotiations on the part of Montano, papal approbation was granted in September, 1572. For a detailed account of the publication of the Polyglot, see M. Rooses, *Christophe Plantin imprimeur anversois* (Anvers, 1890); also see L. Voet, *The Plantin Press* (Amsterdam, 1980), I; *The Golden Compasses*, (Amsterdam, 1972), II. Also see Giorgio Levi della Vida, *Ricerche sulla formazione del più antico fondo dei manoscritti orientali della Biblioteca Vaticana* (Città del Vaticano, 1939), pp. 304–306.

Royal Bible printed in Syriac. But about the description of the codex this may suffice. In fact, whoever desires to know more about the antiquity of the codex, about its author, about the location, land and town in which it was written, he may consult the folio inserted at the end of the codex, where he will find the particulars translated from Syriac into Latin.⁷

In addition to Kircher's dedicatory letter and exposition of the history of the codex there are other statements about the text which are also translated into Latin. These remarks surround a crude drawing of a prelate, attired in a stole as if in preparation for Mass. The prelate is holding a book which probably represents the Syriac Gospels. He is depicted within a tondo placed in the center of the four explanations of the Syriac Gospels, all of which form a cross. Above the head of the churchman we read: "In the year 945 on the twenty-fourth day of December this holy book of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John has been transcribed; in this book there are readings for all the feasts of the year and for other orders and various indices; transcribed with the help of God and the most holy martyrs."⁸

⁷"Extractus ex Domini Patris Athanasii Kircheri literis datis Romae 19. Martii 1666.

Mitto id Serenitati Vestrae qvo nihil mihi fuit carius, nil pretiosius, videlicet Quatuor Christi Euangeliorum rarissimum, vetustissimumque codicem, Syriacâ lingvâ, nec non Characterem quem Estranghelo vocant, ante annos 745, prout inscriptio ejus in fine libri demonstrat, conscriptum; Continet autem praeter 4 Evangelia non nullas perbreves glossas marginales, modo arabicon [*mallem arabico.*] jam Syriaca lingva conscriptas. In calce foliorum sere [*mallem fere.*] semper Evangelistarum nomina rubro colore conscripta reperiet, quibus in occurrentium textuum concinnatione consensum concordiamque indicant. Ne vero in reperiundis capitulis Lector tempus perderet, nos ea juxta consuetam in Latinis Evangelii capitulorum seriem et distributionem singula suis locis apposuimus. In fine quoque Codicis Evangelii secundum Ioannem, quae deerant, supplevimus. Posthaec sequuntur Indices qvi qvo tempore, die, festisque Evangelia recitari debeant, exponunt. Scriptus fuit Codex, ubi supra memini, lingva Syriaca, qvâ tempore Christi tota Palaestina vulgo utebatur. Unde qvi lingvam Hebraeum nôrit, hanc sine difficultate intra breve tempus addisset, [*mallem addiscet.*] maximè si in Lingva Chaldaea, quam? Chargumicam vocant, exercitatus fuerit: cum haec ab illa non nisi caractere differat, ut proinde ad codicem legendum nil aliud opus sit, quam ut in Caractere Estrangelico, qvi à Syriaco vix differt, legendo sese exerceat Lector, qvòd ut majori cum facilitate fiat; alphabetum: . . . [At this point in the Latin text Kircher inserts the Syriac alphabet. Then the letter continues.] hic apponendum censui. Porrò textus Evangelicus ubique conformis est ei, qvi in Bibliis Regiis Plantinianis Syriacè impressis exhibetur. Sed haec de codicis descriptione sufficiant. Qvâ enim de antiquitate Codicis, de ejus Scriptore, de loco, patria, oppido ubi conscriptus fuit, plura scire desideraverit, is adeat folium fini codicis insertum, ubi singula ex Syra in Latinam lingvam translata reperiet." See above, note 1.

⁸"Anno 945

die 24 Decembris descriptus fuit liber iste Sanctus Matthaei Marci Lucae Ioannis;

On the right side of the folio appears an important statement concerning the editor of the text and its provenance: "Therefore, this holy book of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John has been carefully preserved; readings in this book were placed with great care and authority with an index and with the year written above. This book, distinguished because of God's word, has been edited by the Presbyter and Abbot S. Saba whose home is in Bethali near Damascus."⁹

Below the drawing the following remarks appear: "In pure fasting and benediction, that is, in the Lent season at the time of Saint John Patriarch of the Apostolic See of Antioch, and in the beatitude of the days of Saint Thomas our Bishop, in the house of our notables, in the house of God, for the honor of whose name it has been consecrated, that book has been completed so that through it God may manifest His name and make His own faithful worthy to understand and to gain eternal life. In consequence of which, well-done, good and faithful servant; because you have been faithful over a few things, I shall establish you over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord."¹⁰

On the left side of the drawing are the words: "Whoever may read this book let him pray before God for Jacob, son of Gideon, and for Mary his wife and for Gideon, his son, that Jesus preserve them. Let him pray likewise for the Presbyter of the Church of Saint Sergius in the village of Hog to be preserved."¹¹

sunt in eo lectiones omnium festorum anni aliorumque ordinum et variorum indicum ex antiquis exemplaribus; descriptus ope dei et SS martyrum." *Ibid.*

⁹"Hic igitur Liber sanctus 4 evangeliorum Matt. Marci Lucae, Ioannis diligenter conservatus fuit, et posuerunt in eo lectiones sollicitudine et potestate magna; cum indice et anno supra scripto excellens propter uerbum dei editus a Presbytero et Abbate S. Sabae cuius habitatio est in Bethali prope Damascum." *Ibid.* This statement appears after Kircher's explanatory letter and also on the folio containing the drawing of the prelate.

¹⁰"In ieiunio puro et benedicto id est in quadragesima tempore S. Ioannis Patriarchae sedis Apostolicae Antiochenae, et in beatitudine dierum S. Thomae Episcopi nostri in domo magnorum nostrorum in domo dei in cuius nominis honorem sacrata fuit; finitus fuit liber iste, ut eo deus manifestet nomen suum et dignos faciat fideles suos ut cognoscant, et lucrentur vitam aeternam; iuxta illud Euge serve bone et fidelis, quia supra pauca fuisti fidelis, supra multa te constituam; intra in gaudium domini tui." *Ibid.*

¹¹"Qui legerit hunc librum orate [*malem orato.*] apud dominum pro Jacobo filio Gedeonis, et pro Maria uxore eius et pro Gedeone filio eius ut ipsos Iesus conseruet. Oret pariter pro Presbytero Ecclesiae S. Sergii in Vico Hog ut conseruetur." *Ibid.*

In the upper left hand corner of the folio appear the words: "Interpretation of the things which have been written in the Syriac language in four parts forming a cross."¹²

Kircher's letter which acknowledges that the Syriac Gospels, presented as a gift to Duke August, conform everywhere to the Royal Bible, the famous Polyglot, edited by Benito Arias Montano and printed by Plantin in Antwerp, is significant for students of Guillaume Postel as well as for those interested in Athanasius Kircher.¹³ Postel's contributions to the Syriac text of the Royal or Polyglot Bible have been well documented.¹⁴ For example, the Syriac text of the New Testament was prepared in Paris in 1568 by Postel's amanuensis and disciple, Guy Lefèvre de la Boderie, under Postel's supervision. Andreas Masius (André Maes), the beloved friend and disciple of Postel, had advised Plantin about a plan for publishing the Bible in five languages as early as 1565. Another pupil of Postel, Raphelengius, also aided Plantin in the publication of the Syriac text.¹⁵

The Wolfenbüttel Codex of the Syriac Gospels may be the Codex used by Postel, Masius, and Guy Lefèvre de la Boderie to establish

¹²"Interpretatio eorum quae (fol. 4^a) in 4 crucis partibus Syra lingua inscripta sunt." *Ibid.* Fol. 4^a obviously does not belong in the text.

¹³For the life and work of Postel see William J. Bouwsma, *Concordia Mundi: The Career and Thought of Guillaume Postel (1510-1581)* (Cambridge, Mass., 1957); Marion L. Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel, Prophet of the Restitution of All Things: His Life and Thought* (The Hague, 1981). For the life of Kircher see Joscelyn Godwin, *Athanasius Kircher: A Renaissance Man and the Quest for Lost Knowledge* (London, 1979); also note Hans Kangro, "Kircher, Athanasius," in *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, ed. Charles Coulston Gillispie (New York, 1973), VII, 374-78, which also contains a select bibliography; for the writings of Kircher see *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*, Nouvelle Édition par Carlos Sommervogel, S.J., (Bruxelles-Paris, 1893), IV, cols. 1046-77. In addition to his autobiography, *P. Athanasii Kircheri vita a semetipso conscripta* (Augsburg, 1684), Father Kircher wrote books on science, ancient languages, history, and mystical theology.

¹⁴See B. Rekkers, *Benito Arias Montano*, pp. 45-69; William Bouwsma, *Concordia Mundi*, p. 241; Giorgio Levi della Vida, *Ricerche sulla formazione del più antico fondo dei manoscritti orientali della Biblioteca Vaticana*, pp. 303-23; F. Secret, "Documents pour servir à l'histoire de la publication de la Bible d'Anvers," *Sefarad* (Madrid, 1958), pp. 121-28; "Les Jésuites et le kabbalisme chrétien à la renaissance," *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance*, 20 (1958) 542-55; L'Ésotérisme de Guy Le Fèvre de La Boderie (Genève, 1969), pp. 9-26; M. Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel*, pp. 115-17, 162-65. For the letters to Masius in which Postel discusses his Syriac exemplaria, see Jacques Georges de Chaupepié, *Nouveau dictionnaire historique et critique* (Amsterdam, 1750), III, 216-18, 220-22, 226-31; see also Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds lat. 3402, fols. 89-92. See also the correspondence of Masius in Max Lossen, *Briefe von Andreas Masius* (Leipzig, 1886).

¹⁵See Rekkers, *Benito Arias Montano*, p. 51.

the Syriac text of the Gospels published in the Polyglot Bible. This paper will explore the facts which support the linking of the Wolfenbüttel Syriac Gospels to the Syriac exemplar which Postel brought from the Orient and which was used to establish the text for the Plan-tin Bible.¹⁶

Postel was fascinated by the land of Syria and by its historical and religious significance. He published his *Syriae descriptio* in 1540, after his return in 1537 from his first journey to the East. Thanks to the financial support of Daniel Bomberg, the famous printer of Hebrew books in Venice, Postel was able to make a second sojourn in the Near East where he secured manuscripts of the New Testament written in the Syriac language. In a letter to Masius written from Jerusalem on August 21, 1549 Postel notes that he had visited "holy Syria" where "there is a large supply of books here, I mean a supply of Chaldean books. . . ." ¹⁷ He tells Masius that he has found the four Gospels and the rest of the New Testament. On June 10, 1550 Postel again writes to Masius and acknowledges his gratitude to Gabriel D'Armon who supplied the funds necessary to acquire volumes of the New Testament in the Syriac language.¹⁸ In 1562 he published *Description et Charte de la Terre Sainte*, the last chapter of which is entitled "la generale description de la Syrie maieure, et la raison de son amplitude." Postel was interested not only in the land of Syria but also in its ancient language which he considered sacred. After his first visit to the Holy Land Postel published in 1538 *Linguarum duodecim characteribus differentium alphabetum, introductio*. . . . Postel notes that Chaldaic or Syriac is the language which is used by those "who live in all of Syria, but especially by the almost four thousand persons who live around Mount Lebanon and are called 'Christians from the

¹⁶One of Postel's early projects was to prepare translations of the Gospels in Arabic, Syriac, and other languages in order to convert the Near East to Christianity.

¹⁷See Giorgio Levi della Vida, *Ricerche*, pp. 309–10; also printed in Chaupepié, p. 216; note also Lossen, pp. 46–47.

In a letter to Cardinal Granvelle, written on the same day as the letter to Masius, Postel again speaks of Syriac and Arabic books. "Si cupis bibliothecam tuam ornare praeclarissimis Syrorum et Arabum Authoribus . . . fac ut Damasci aut Alcahirae habeam vnde et mihi tenuiter sumptus doctoresque suppeditem tibi vero libros coemptos." See Kuntz, "A New Link in the Correspondence of Guillaume Postel," *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance*, 41 (1979) 578–81. The ms. is found in Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, ms. 21698, fasc. 17, formerly N.A. 127.

¹⁸Giorgio Levi della Vida, *Ricerche*, p. 310; also note Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel*, pp. 93–94.

zone.' ”¹⁹ Postel’s fascination with the Syriac language is apparent in many of his works.²⁰ In his *Omnium Linguarum quibus ad hanc usque diem mundus est usus, origo . . .*, which is a beautiful broadsheet in which the ancient alphabets are printed and their development discussed, Postel writes of the Syriac language and his work on the Syriac Gospels: “If the genuine exemplar of Matthew with the letter to the Hebrews exists anywhere in the world, it is in this language. Therefore, from this language I saw to it that the most ancient exemplar of the four Gospels in the primitive character of the Hebrews be transcribed for Daniel Bomberg so that he may print it and faithfully pursue the etymology of the names of the New Testament in which individual mysteries are hidden. These mysteries can be sought only from this language in which Jesus commonly spoke.”²¹

The Syriac language held great significance for Postel, since he believed that Hebrew was the sacred tongue and that Syriac was the first offspring of this holy language.²² Postel argued that the names of things had been given by God in an instant to Adam through the angel Raziel. The divine imprint was infused in Adam’s mind in the Hebrew language which was used by mankind until the confusion of tongues.²³ Languages like Syriac which remained closest to Hebrew would surely be considered of great importance. Since Hebrew was considered to be the first language and hence the language nearest “to

¹⁹“ . . . qui in tota Syria habitant, sed precipue circa montem Libanum ad 4000 hominum, vulgo Christianos de zona dicunt.” *Linguarum duodecim characteribus differentium alphabetum, introductio*, fol. Biiii.

²⁰Cf., for example, his *De Foenicum literis, seu de prisco Latinae et Graecae linguae caractere . . .* (Paris, 1552); *De Originibus, seu de varia et potissimum orbi Latino ad hanc diem incognita, aut inconsiderata historia . . .* (Basel, 1553); *De Originibus seu de Hebraicae linguae et gentis antiquitate . . .* (Paris, 1538).

²¹“Si usquam gentium genuinum Matthaei exemplar extat, cum epistola ad Hebraeos, in hac lingua est. Ideo ex his literis curavi Danieli Bomberg, ut uetustissimum exemplar quatuor Euangeliorum in characterem priscum Hebraeorum transcriberetur ut liceat excudere, et fideliter etymologiam uenari nominum noui Testamenti, in quibus sunt abdita singularia mysteria, quae non nisi ab hac lingua, in qua cum plebe locutus est Iesus, peti possunt.” This broadsheet was probably published in Basel between 1552–1553. I am indebted to Doctor Carlos Gilly-Ortiz who provided me with a photocopy of this work. See also Maurice de Gandillac, “Le Thème de la concorde universelle,” in *Guillaume Postel* (Paris, 1985), pp. 192–97, where he publishes a facsimile of the broadsheet which is found in the Öffentliche Bibliothek der Universität, Basel.

²²*Ibid.*

²³See *De Originibus, seu, de varia et potissimum orbi Latino ad hanc diem incognita*, pp. 19–26. On the quarrels during the Cinquecento concerning the original language, see Paolo Simoncelli, *La Lingua di Adamo: Guillaume Postel tra accademici e fuoriusciti*

the truth of things," Syriac would hold the next position.²⁴ In addition, Postel argued that since Syriac was the language spoken by Jesus, Jews, and many Christians, the Gospels in Syriac could shed much light on the interpretations of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.²⁵

When Postel returned from the Orient in 1550 or 1551, he left some of his manuscripts with Daniel Bomberg in Venice, before he departed for Paris and afterwards to Basel. However, by August, 1553 he was back in Venice and again at work on his project of publishing the Gospels in Syriac. During this period, as it appears, a Syrian priest named Moses Mardenus presented himself as an aid to Postel.²⁶ Moses and Postel had previously known each other at Rome.²⁷ At length Postel decided to send Moses Mesopotamia, as Postel called him, to Vienna to aid his friend John Albert Widmanstadt who was preparing an edition of the New Testament in Syriac.²⁸ However, before Moses' departure for Vienna Postel collated his own Syriac exemplar with the older manuscript of Moses Mesopotamia.²⁹ He found the manuscripts to be identical in every respect.³⁰

By the end of the year 1553 Postel joined Moses in Vienna and gave assistance to Widmanstadt in his preparation of the Syriac New

fiorentini (Firenze, 1984). One may also consult the sagacious remarks of Giovanni Cipriani in the introduction to his edition of Postel's *De Etruriae regionis . . . originibus* . . . (Roma, 1986).

²⁴*De Etruriae regionis . . . originibus* (Florentiae, 1551), p. 59.

²⁵See *De Summopere Consyderandis, et non minus admirandis mysteriis et Veritatibus quae ex propriae ipsius Christi hoc est Maternae linguae quae Syriaca est verbis in Euangelio Syriaco conservatis eliciuntur* . . . The British Library, Sloane ms. 1413, fols. 1-13.

²⁶Of this good fortune Postel wrote: ". . . attuli Venetias multa vetustissima fidelissimaque exemplaria Arabici noui testamenti, de quibus utrisque [*mallem* utriusque] per typos multiplicandis ut in orientem referantur aut deferantur, et dum maxime de hac re cum loh. Renialmo Dan. Bomberghi curatore, cuius aere Syriaca ipsa exemplaria paraveram, pertractarem, Ecce (o admiranda Christi prouidentia) se offert utrique Moses ille Syrus Sacerdos. . . ." The British Library, Sloane ms. 1413, fol. 87.

²⁷Postel wrote of the meeting with Moses in Rome: ". . . pridem Romae a suo Patriarcha misso fuerat. . . ." The British Library, Sloane ms. 1413, fol. 87.

²⁸*Ibid.*; also see the *Praefatio* of Postel's *Cosmographicae disciplinae compendium* (Basel, 1561), sig. a3.

²⁹". . . (collatis prius eius exemplaribus cum meo illo in ipsa Christi lingua Materna scripto quod nuper ad id attuleram)" The British Library, Sloane ms. 1413, fol. 87. See also nn. 26 and 27.

³⁰See Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds lat. 3402, fol. 91; see also Giorgio Levi della Vida, *Ricerche*, p. 305; F. Secret, "La Lettre de Postel à Masius du 24 Août 1563," *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance*, 23 (1961), 534-40.

Testament, which was based upon the codex of Moses Mesopotamia.³¹ He was also appointed to a chair at the University by the Emperor Ferdinand I.³² Among those who taught theology, law, medicine, the arts, philosophy, and language at the University in Vienna, Postel received the largest stipend.³³ In addition to the reputation which Postel was gaining from his lectures at the University, Widmanstadt acknowledged Postel's contributions to the printing of the Syriac New Testament in the *Praefatio* of this volume.³⁴ Postel claimed in a letter to Theodore Zwinger that he had brought back from the Orient a Syriac exemplar of the Gospels before this text was published for the first time in Vienna in 1555.³⁵

³¹See Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel*, pp. 116–18. In the *Cosmographicae disciplinae compendium* (Basel, 1561), sig. a3, Postel's words seem to indicate that Moses arrived in Venice shortly after Postel returned to Venice from the Orient, that is, in 1550 or 1551. The collation of Postel's Syriac ms. with that of Moses is also confirmed in a letter to the Emperor Ferdinand. See The British Library, Sloane ms. 1413, fol. 87. See above nn. 26, 27, 29. If Moses arrived in Venice shortly after Postel's return in 1550–1551 as the citation noted above suggests (. . . quum vix rediissem, se statim mihi Venetiis obtulit . . . ille . . . Moses . . .), his assistance to Widmanstadt was of longer duration than is usually thought. See Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel*, pp. 115–16. See also Giorgio Levi della Vida, *Ricerche*, p. 305, n. 4.

³²See Postel's long letters to the Emperor Ferdinand, The British Library, Sloane ms. 1413, fols. 84–89, 90–91; also see the recent biography of Ferdinand I by Paula Sutter Fichtner, *Ferdinand I of Austria: The Politics of Dynasticism in the Age of the Reformation* (East European Monographs, No. C, Boulder, 1982), in which she remarks, p. 7, that the Emperor hoped to use Postel's linguistic abilities to spread the Christian message in the Ottoman Empire. This had been, of course, Postel's aim long before this association with Ferdinand.

³³Postel's vast erudition was no doubt responsible for his preeminent salary. The record of each teacher and his salary is noted, and of Postel the entry states: "Secundus Graecus, qui et idem Linguae Arabicae Professor et quotidie bis legat, D. Gulielmus Postellus ducentos." The salaries varied from eighty florins to two hundred florins, which was the stipend of Postel. The average wage for the year 1554 was about one hundred eighteen florins. See *Geschichte der kaiserlichen Universität zu Wien*, ed. Rudolf King (Wien, 1854), reprinted (Frankfurt, 1969), p. 165. I am indebted to Professor Joseph Freedman for sending me this reference.

³⁴"Dum porro ad mandata haec tua conficienda, Rex Auguste, necessaria omnia apparantur, insperantibus etiam nobis intervenit Gulielmus Postellus, vir supra aetatis nostrae consuetudinem, supra etiam multorum captum mirabiliter eruditus qui parte Asiae meliore semel iterumque peragrata, magnas et Syriacae et Arabicae linguae opeis consecratus minime vulgare nobis attulit adiumentum: . . ." *Novum Testamentum Syriace a . . . Widmanstadio* (Vienna, 1555), sig. A****2^v. Also see Postel's remarks to Ferdinand, The British Library, Sloane ms. 1413, fol. 87; note also Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel*, p. 117.

³⁵Postel wrote: "Syriaca enim lingua et pictura est, qua videlicet lingua Dominus noster una cum virgine Matre sua vsus est praedicando Euangelium, cuius exemplar pridem ex oriente attuleram prius quam Viennae Austriae excuderetur." The British Library, Sloane ms. 1413, fol. 105.

Although Postel enjoyed his association with Widmanstadt, he departed suddenly from Vienna, abandoning his royal appointment to a chair in the University as well as his work with Widmanstadt on the Syriac Bible.³⁶ His abrupt action resulted from his desire to refute the listing of all his books and himself as heretical by the Venetian Inquisition.³⁷ Postel was ultimately tried by the Venetian Inquisition in 1555 and later incarcerated in the papal prison of Ripetta in Rome.³⁸ Upon the death of Paul IV on 29 August, 1559, the Jews and

³⁶Postel dedicated his *Clarissima et ex Aristotelis verbis sententiisque, hoc est maxime Naturalibus Rationibus deducta Demonstratio* . . . to Widmanstadt. See Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, ms. Oefeleana 262, fol. 1^v. Postel wrote of his hasty departure from Vienna: "Or pour autant, questant ainsi alle a Vienne j'entendis pour . . . certain quhom havoit a Venize de par la court de Rome imprime un certain catalogue d'Escrivains ou scripteurs quhom nomoit Heretikes, et que J'entendis que au lieu des Escripitz de Postel, le propre Nom et la persone de Postel estoit imprime ou pour simprimer bien tost, Je laissay a Vienne le Roy ses gages et mon entreprise, et (qui fut une oeuvre la plus necessaire qui iamais fut ou pouroit estre, rompue et delaisse a cause de la Romaine iniquite) cessant le commencement de limprimerie de l'Arabique Evangile, ie men revins a Venize la ou ledict Evangile premierement havoit par moy este apporte." Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds lat. 3402, fols. 10–11. Widmanstadt also noted in the *praefatio* of his *Novum Testamentum* (see above, n. 34) the reason for Postel's departure.

³⁷"La cause de ma venue et retour a Venize estoit pour obvier a ce Catalogue la ou la Personne propre de Postel estoit en nombre, et non pas ses escriptz, qui est la plus grande faulsete du monde." Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds lat. 3402, fol. 11. Postel's name and his books appeared in the *Catalogus Librorum Haereticorum* . . . (Venetiis apud Gabrielem Iulitum de Ferraris, et Fratres MDLIII), which was promulgated by Filippo Archinto. In the copy of the *Catalogus* which is in the Biblioteca Marciana (Misc. 2176, opuscoli 10), there is a handwritten statement which confirms Archinto's role: "Il Prete Antonio Possevino de la Compagnia del Jesu nel suo Apparato sacro attribuisce questo Catalogo di libri Heretici a M. Giovanni de la Casa: Ma nell' Anno 1554 ch'è stampato, era Nuntio del Papa in Venetia Monsignore Lodovico Beccadelli Arcivescouo di Ragusi, al quale pare che succedessi M. Filippo Archinto. . . ." Also note *Saggio di bibliografia veneziana composto da Emmanuele Antonio Cicogna* (Venezia, 1847), p. 127, no. 865: "Il secondo indice (per quanto ci consta) che uscì fra noi nel 1554, per ordine dell'altro Nuncio apostolico Filippo Archinto, ha il seguente frontispizio Catalogus librorum haereticorum . . . apud Gabrielem Iulitum de Ferraris et Fratres MDLIII in 8." For information about the complex relationship between Archinto and Postel, see M. L. Kuntz, "Filippo Archinto and Guillaume Postel: New Evidence about Archinto's Role in the Imprisonment of Postel," *Studi Veneziani*, N. S. 11 (1986) 73–90. Also see Aldo Stella, "Il processo veneziano di Guglielmo Postel," *Rivista di storia della chiesa in Italia*, 22 (1968), 430–31.

³⁸Postel wrote of his imprisonment thus: ". . . je fus declare fol ou comme en Latin portoit ma sentence, Amens, et ayant este quelque temps a Venize, en estroite prison, fus envoye a Rome . . . (non pas de tour de None ou de Castel S. Angelo comme dict le Marchant de Lyon . . .) et demandant Audience y ay ceste plus de troys ans et demy, jusques a ce qu'au jour que le Pape Charaffe avoit delibere de me mettre en un confinement ou a la mort, il mourut a l'heure propre que je fus moy 85^{me} delivre de la

those accused of heresy were freed upon orders of a Cardinal in the Vatican before the prison was burned by the angry Roman populace.³⁹ Postel escaped at this time. However, in 1564 he was again considered dangerous and was seized at the home of Joseph Scaliger in Paris and later confined to the Monastery of Saint Martin des Champs.⁴⁰

Because of Postel's condemnation by the Venetian Inquisition and because of his continued problems with the royal authorities in France who considered his repeated demands for universal reformation tantamount to heresy, Postel's efforts on behalf of the Plantin Bible could not be acknowledged. Although in 1555 before Postel's condemnation Widmanstadt had praised Postel for his erudition and for his help with the publication of the Vienna edition of the Syriac New Testament, Postel's reputation by 1568 had become so notorious that his contributions to the Plantin project were concealed by his friends.⁴¹ Even the brief notice by Guy Lefèvre that he had prepared the Syriac New Testament "from the most ancient exemplar brought from the Orient by Postel" caused Plantin to prepare for distribution in Catholic countries a second expurgated edition of the *Appartus* in which Lefèvre's remarks did not appear. Some of the original editions were, however, sent to Germany.⁴²

Even Andreas Masius, the beloved friend and disciple of Postel and one of the editors of the Plantin Polyglot, did not acknowledge the name of Postel nor his contributions to Syriac studies in the preface of his Syriac Grammar which was published in volume seven of the Plantin Bible.⁴³ Although the *praefatio* revealed an intimate knowledge of the publication of the Vienna edition of the Syriac Gospels, Postel's contributions remained unmentioned. For example, Masius wrote: "But like the Jews, the Syrians also use that most accurate style of writing only in the script of sacred books. Would that the scribe who copied that exemplar of the New Testament in

prison de ripette, non pas de tour de None." Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds lat. 3402, fol. 11. See also The British Library, Sloane ms. 1413, fol. 44.

³⁹See Degl'Istorici delle cose veneziane, i quali hanno scritto per publico decreto, Tome Sesto . . . dal Senatore Andrea Morosini (Venice, 1718), p. 151.

⁴⁰See Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel*, p. 35, also n. 111.

⁴¹See B. Rekkers, *Benito Arias Montano*, p. 51.

⁴²See Giorgio Levi della Vida, *Ricerche*, p. 305, n. 4.

⁴³The manuscript of Masius' Syriac Grammar is found in the Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier, Bruxelles, ms. 416.

the city of Mozal near the Tigris River had used it. Because of the generosity of the best and kindest Emperor Ferdinand and because of the effort of Moses Mardenus this exemplar has been published, and we now have one."⁴⁴

He also noted significant details about the publication of his Syriac Grammar and mentioned the name of Moses Mardenus (Moses Mesopotamia). For example:

In this matter I do not see before me the footprints of any man to follow. But a Grammar written by Syrians themselves exists. Those who have a zeal for these things will be able to soothe their desire for more complete erudition by their expectation of it. Indeed, there is hope that this Grammar at some time will appear. For when Moses Mardenus had brought back from Assyria that Grammar and likewise a dictionary of Syrian words, as they call it, and had left them at Venice, he therefore could not make a copy of those books for me, who privately sometimes used to hear that learned man at Rome. Later, Moses arrived at Vienna from Rome and transcribed each book for John Albert Widmanstadt, as he indicated to me in his own letters.⁴⁵

It is significant that Masius did not mention that Postel was in Venice at the same time as Moses; nor did he state that Postel had collated his own exemplar of the Syriac New Testament with the older codex of Moses; nor did he indicate that Postel had sent Moses Mesopotamia to Vienna to help Widmanstadt with his edition of the first Syriac New Testament to be published in Europe.

Masius was not only afraid to acknowledge the name of Postel but was also fearful that even the mention of his own name in the preface of the Polyglot Bible would cause problems.⁴⁶ However, Benito Arias Montano, the general editor of the enterprise, was unwilling to

⁴⁴"Sed ut Judaei, ita Syri quoque accuratissimo illo scribendi genere in sola sacrorum librorum scriptura vtuntur, atque vtinam etiam usus fuisset ille librarius, qui in urbe Mozal ad flumen Tigrim exemplar illud noui testamenti scripsit: de quo id optimi et benignissimi Caesaris Ferdinandi liberalitate, et Mosis Mardeni industria typis est expressum, quod unum nos habemus: . . . " *Ibid.*

⁴⁵" . . . neque ullius hominis, quae sequar, vestigia hac in re ante me video. Sed exstat a Syris ipsis conscripta Grammatica; eius expectatione desiderium absolutioris doctrinae poterunt lenire ii, in quibus est istarum rerum studium. Spes enim est, eam aliquando prodituram in lucem. Nam Moses Mardenus cum ipsam et simul dictionarium, ut vocant, Syricorum vocabulorum ex Assyria secum asportasset Venetiisque reliquisset et proinde mihi, qui ipsum Romae priuatim interdum audiebam doctorem, eorum librorum copiam facere non potuisset, post Roma Viennam profectus Ioanni Alberto Widmanstadio utrumque descripsit ut mihi suis litteris significauit." *Ibid.*

⁴⁶B. Rekkers, *Benito Arias Montano*, p. 55.

keep Masius' great contributions a secret. Masius' reluctance was well-founded, however, for in 1572 a Papal commission was shocked that Andreas Masius was one of the contributors.⁴⁷ If Postel's name had appeared as a contributor, it is certain that Papal approval would never have been received. Nevertheless, the major contributions to the Polyglot, known also as the *Biblia de Montano*, were made by Plantin, Masius, and Postel.⁴⁸ In addition to his textual assistance to the project, in 1569 Postel advised Plantin how Robert Granjon, the master French type-cutter, was to prepare a Syriac fount. Plantin's letter to Postel in which he asked advice about the Syriac fount is the only recorded occasion in which Plantin consulted an expert about an alphabet.⁴⁹

In spite of his zeal in regard to the Plantin project, Postel was well aware of the reasons why the suppression of his name as contributor was necessary. In a letter, dated 1572 from Paris, Postel writing to Theodore Zwinger complains of a "living death" which is worse than death, since he is considered a non-person or one without mind. Consequently, he is forced to allow others to receive credit for the work which he performed in editing the Syriac New Testament.⁵⁰ Postel states that one of his disciples, Guy Lefèvre de la Boderie, has the responsibility for the Targum and for all of the Syriac New Testament. Since Postel has been discredited, he can teach, when there is an opportunity, through his students.⁵¹ Postel also notes that the Royal Bible has been approved by the Pope with a privilege for

⁴⁷Although the Louvain and Paris Censors had approved the Polyglot which was printed in Antwerp in 1571, the Papal approbation was not granted until September, 1571. See B. Rekkers, *Benito Arias Montano*, pp. 49–56.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁴⁹See Leon Voet, *The Golden Compasses*, II, 80. Postel was also among the first in Europe to use Arabic type. See Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel*, p. 116.

⁵⁰"Sed quia in eo statu sum (vtinam summae et in arduo positae virtutis meritis, . . .) ut maxime viuens satagensque rerum diuinarum humanarumque, nullus, et Amentis instar, mortuo deterior sum, cogor ut aliena opera fiant quae procuro." The British Library, Sloane ms. 1413, fol. 105.

⁵¹"Unus ex meis praefuit editioni tam Thargumi totius quam Syriaci Noui Testamenti. Nomen eius vobis nondum innotuit, est enim iuuenis admodum et etiam fratre juniore praeditus (huic Nicolao, seniori autem Guidoni Fabricio nomen est) qui ita callet linguam Christianam illam, ut si auditor uterque Christi docentis fuisset. Sic fungor vice cotis, et qui veritate non valeo, occasione, ut dicebat Paulus, doceo." The British Library, Sloane ms. 1413, fol. 105.

twenty years after its acceptance by "Christian Kings and the Emperor."⁵²

The publication of the Syriac New Testament always held great significance for Postel, even though his work in this regard was not recognized. In a manuscript written one year before his death Postel celebrated the publication of the Syriac New Testament, first in Vienna in 1555 by Widmanstadt, and then in Antwerp in 1572 by Plantin, as a work which proclaimed the glory and praise of Christ. He also noted that he, the "ass of Christ," had brought the Syriac New Testament to Europe from his Eastern perambulation.⁵³ Postel considered this a sacred mission.⁵⁴ His travels in the near East and his knowledge of the ancient languages enhanced his conviction that world unity could more quickly be accomplished when the people of the East could read the Gospels in their own tongue and when the people of the West could study the sacred writings and commentaries in the ancient original languages. Because God had located the Garden of Eden in the East where man first realized his divinely given Reason, Postel maintained that divine light or enlightenment had flowed from East to West in the person of Noah. Following the forgeries of Annio of Viterbo, Postel claimed that Noah had brought enlightenment to the West from the East when his ark had landed in the Etruscan region after the great flood.⁵⁵ The West must now carry back to the East the light of Divine Reason, made clear in the Gospels as well as in other sacred texts. Postel's concept of divine illumination flowing from East to West and then from West to East was central to his missionary program of unification of all people under God and

⁵²*Ibid.*

⁵³"In ipsius IESU Christi summam et Renovatam Gloriam, Laudem, et illustrationem, ex Ierosolymitana peregratione, propria in lingua IESU Christo et Mariae Virgini tunc vulgari, Novum Testamentum ab hoc Asino, qui in Gloria summa sua ponit id nominis, ut portet Deum Verum IESUM Christum et glorificet in suo corpore, delatum est, ut tam ex hac Occasione Viennae Austriae ubi . . . solus Widmanstadius Cancellarius nomen et Famam detulit, secunda Editio Antwerpiae non sine cura nostra licet Fabricii fratres . . . Guido et Nicolaus sed magis ille suas operas Christo gratis locarent. Nam a Rege Hiberorum cui honor operis datur, ne obulum quidem unquam acceperet." Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds lat. 3401, fol. 35.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵See M. Kuntz, "Journey as *Restitutio* in the Thought of Guillaume Postel (1510–1581)," *History of European Ideas*, no. 4 (Spring, 1981), 1–15.

ultimately to his call for a one-world state. His zeal for collecting manuscripts in Syriac, Arabic and other ancient tongues reflected a more encompassing goal than that of a philologue alone. He believed that he had been chosen as God's *congregator* to carry the light from West to East.⁵⁶

When Athanasius Kircher in 1666 presented his copy of the Gospels in Syriac to Duke August of Braunschweig-Lüneburg, he like Postel attached great significance to this gift of the "rare and most ancient text of the four Gospels written in the Syriac language."⁵⁷ He considered the Syriac Gospels his most precious possession.⁵⁸ Father Kircher does not indicate how he obtained this ancient codex nor from whom. He does not mention Postel in his discussion of the text, but there is an implicit reference to Postel, since Kircher writes that the manuscript of the Syriac Gospels which he is presenting to Duke August "conforms everywhere to the text which is employed in the Plantin Royal Bible printed in Syriac."⁵⁹ Since Postel's work on the Plantin Polyglot had not been entirely concealed even in his own lifetime, his role in the project could have been known to Kircher, since Postel for a brief period had been a Jesuit like Kircher and had always maintained contacts with Jesuits.⁶⁰

There is additional evidence which links the Wolfenbüttel codex to Postel. In the folio which is inserted at the end of the Wolfenbüttel codex the editor is identified as Abbot S. Saba "whose dwelling is in Bethali near Damascus."⁶¹ The Wolfenbüttel codex which had been

⁵⁶See Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel*, pp. 143–51. For the most complete account of the East's contribution to the West, see Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe* (Chicago, 1970), I–II; note especially II. 2, 257–85, 320–23.

⁵⁷See above, p. 1.

⁵⁸See above, p. 1.

⁵⁹See above, n. 7.

⁶⁰Postel was corresponding with Jacobus Laynez in 1562, seventeen years after his separation from the Society of Jesus. See *Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu*, Epp. Extr. 46, fols. 248–50. A Jesuit was with Postel on the day of his death. See Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Dupuy 630, fol. 125. For Postel's relations with the Jesuits see Henri Bernard-Maitre, S. J., "Aux Origines françaises de la compagnie de Jésus: L'Apologie de Guillaume Postel, à la fin de l'année 1552," *Recherches de science religieuse*, 38, no. 3–4 (1952), 209–33; "Le Passage de Guillaume Postel chez les premiers Jésuites de Rome," *Mélanges d'histoire littéraire de la renaissance offerts à Henri Chamard* (Paris, 1951), pp. 227–43; François Secret, "Les Jésuites et le kabbalisme chrétien à la renaissance," *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance*, 20, 543–55. Pietro Tacchi-Venturi, *Storia della Compagnia di Gesù in Italia*, II. 2, 101–106; see also Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel*, pp. 58–63.

⁶¹Wolfenbüttel, ms. 3.1.300. Aug. fol. See above, n. 9.

the property of Athanasius Kircher was edited at Damascus, as the manuscript states. The Syriac New Testament which Postel brought from the Holy Land on his second visit also came from Damascus and was used by Postel and Guy Lefèvre to prepare the Syriac text of the Plantin Royal Bible after Postel had collated his text with the codex of Moses which came from Meredini.⁶²

The Syriac manuscript from Damascus which Postel and Lefèvre used to establish the text of the Plantin Bible was the same text which was sent to them in Paris by the son of Daniel Bomberg. This precious manuscript had been left in Venice by Postel in the care of Daniel Bomberg.⁶³ This manuscript was not the manuscript brought to Europe by Moses Mesopotamia. It was also different from another exemplar of the Gospels which Postel also brought to Europe; this second Syriac exemplar, now in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Vat. Sir. 16), was used by Emanuel Tremellius for his own edition of the New Testament.⁶⁴

Therefore, the likelihood that Kircher's Syriac exemplar was the same exemplar as the one used by Postel and Guy Lefèvre in their work on the Bible of Plantin increases when one considers that the number of Syriac texts in Europe during the period, 1555–1572, was limited and that Kircher himself says that his most ancient exemplar

⁶²"Dolet quidem vehementer quod exemplaria illa Syriaca quae attuli tibi non sint data sicut et promissa. Sed sis omnino certissimus ne Iodo quidem uno differe ab eo exemplari Mosis Mesopotamii, quo usi sumus ad emittendum typis. Nam una cum eo contuleram meum, eo quod antiquius videbatur suum esse, et ne litera quidem una differre comperi, licet meum exemplar Damasci sim nactus, suum autem Meredini sit scriptum, in media Mesopotamia. . . ." *Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds lat. 3402, fol. 91.*

⁶³See Giorgio Levi della Vida, *Ricerche*, pp. 304–306; also see n. 4 on pp. 304–305. Of this manuscript Guy Lefèvre de la Boderie wrote: ". . . atque cum vetustissimo exemplari Syro, iam ab anno 1500, regni Alexandri, a quo Syri annos suos numerant, manuscripto religiose contuli. Illud autem vetustissimum exemplar allatum fuerat ex Oriente a Postello, sumptibus, ut ipsemet scribit viri optimi et doctissimi Danielis Bombergi, ex Antverpia oriundi, cui Hebraicae et Chaldaicae linguae promotionem acceptam fere debemus, nobis autem commodatum est beneficio Danielis Bombergi, qui ut nominis, sic paternae virtutis haeres ad rem literariam provehendam studiosissime incumbit." Cited by Levi della Vida, pp. 304–305.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 303–306. Levi della Vida has demonstrated that the codex used by Tremellius was different from the codex used by Postel and Guy Lefèvre in preparing the text of the Plantin Bible in Paris in 1568, since, as Levi della Vida states, p. 305, "si trovava nella Biblioteca Palatina di Heidelberg fin dal 1555, quando il Fabricio non aveva che quattro anni. . . ." Hence, he concludes, ". . . il codice usato dal Fabricio dev'essere stato diverso dal Vat. Sir. 16. . . ." *Ibid.*

conforms everywhere to the Plantin Bible, whose text, one knows, was prepared from the Syriac exemplar which was brought by Postel to Europe, which was left with Bomberg in Venice, and which was later sent to Paris by the printer's son. Even if the Wolfenbüttel codex is not the Postel codex, the two codices must have had a common ancestor, since, according to Lachmann's rule, their readings are "in agreement everywhere."⁶⁵

The possibility that Postel's Syriac exemplar was acquired by Kircher is strengthened by the fact that both Postel and Kircher were Jesuits and that many of Postel's oriental manuscripts passed to the Jesuit Collège Louis-le-Grand (Collège de Clermont).⁶⁶ One is not certain if Postel's Syriac exemplar was in his possession at the time of his death in the Monastery of Saint Martin des Champs, or if it was in the possession of Guy Lefèvre de la Boderie. Since Guy's brother, Nicholas, was the executor of Postel's will, Guy would surely have had access to Postel's important effects.

Kircher could have obtained Postel's Syriac exemplar from the Jesuits of Louvain. Some of Postel's books had been offered either as a gift to the Jesuits of Louvain or for the price of two hundred gold pieces, although this transaction seems to have been aborted.⁶⁷ However, Postel's disciple, Guy Lefèvre, lived among the Jesuits of Louvain and remained on such good terms with them that he dedicated some poems to Cardinal Robert Bellarmine.⁶⁸ Guy could have given some of Postel's manuscripts to the Jesuits of Louvain, who in turn could have given some of them to Kircher. One can also point out that the manuscript copy of the Syriac Grammar of Andreas Masius, Postel's beloved friend and disciple, belonged to the Jesuits of Louvain, before it became part of the Royal Library of Brussels, as the manuscript itself testifies.

It would have been entirely appropriate for Kircher to have received a manuscript of the Gospels in Syriac because he like Postel had a knowledge of ancient languages. Like Postel Kircher was also

⁶⁵See Vinton A. Dearing, *Principles and Practice of Textual Analysis* (Berkeley, 1974), pp. 5-8.

⁶⁶See Alfred Franklin, *Les Anciennes bibliothèques de Paris*, II (Amsterdam, 1968), 134-35, 252-57. One of Postel's works was dedicated to Guillaume du Prat, a famous Jesuit at the Collège de Clermont.

⁶⁷See Jacques Georges de Chauffepié, *Nouveau dictionnaire historique et critique*, p. 222; also p. 233.

⁶⁸See F. Secret, *L'Ésotérisme de Guy Le Fèvre de la Boderie*, pp. 23-24.

interested in the Kabbalah, as were other Jesuits, and he saw "good Kabbalah" in continuity with Divine prophecy about the Messiah.⁶⁹

Although the evidence tentatively supports the theory that the Syriac exemplar which Kircher gave to Duke August is the same manuscript which Postel brought home, one must also point out that some aspects still remain uncertain. For example, the ancient editor of the Syriac exemplar now at Wolfenbüttel dated his comments about the codex in 945 A.D.⁷⁰ Guy Lefèvre de la Boderie wrote that the exemplar which was brought to Europe by Postel and which was used for the recension of the Plantin Polyglot was "most ancient" and "iam ab anno 1500 regni Alexandri, a quo Syri annos suos numerant. . . ."⁷¹ Since the precise meaning of the date given by Guy Lefèvre is difficult to ascertain, this problem is yet to be resolved. Another troublesome point is that the Kircher exemplar at Wolfenbüttel contains the Gospels, while Postel's codex contained all the books of the New Testament. However, one can suppose that either Kircher himself received only a part of the precious Syriac manuscript or that he gave only the Gospels to Duke August. One could also suggest that the manuscript in Wolfenbüttel could be the exemplar which was brought to Europe by Moses Mesopotamia. This seems untenable, however, since the Wolfenbüttel codex came originally from Damascus, while the manuscript of Moses Mesopotamia came from Meredini.⁷¹

The fact that both the Wolfenbüttel exemplar and Postel's Syriac manuscript of the New Testament came from Damascus suggests that the Wolfenbüttel codex which had belonged to Kircher was very likely brought into Europe by Postel. In spite of certain ambiguities, the evidence seems to support the thesis presented in this paper. Nine years before Postel's death he wrote to Theodore Zwinger that "the Lord would provide either that his works be preserved for posterity or that they perish."⁷³ If Kircher's Syriac exemplar is indeed the one

⁶⁹See F. Secret, "Les Jésuites et le kabbalisme chrétien à la renaissance," p. 542-55, especially p. 554.

⁷⁰See above, n. 8.

⁷¹See Giorgio Levi della Vida, *Ricerche*, p. 305.

⁷²See above, n. 62.

⁷³"Sed posteritati curabit aut asservari Dominus aut perire, quum pro eius honore scribere sategerim et longe plura ex Naturalis Rationis usu a Christi Doctrina numquam recedente quam ex autoritate." The British Library, Sloane ms. 1413, fol. 105.

which Postel originally brought to Europe, its survival in the famous library at Wolfenbüttel would no doubt have brought joy to that troubled genius and would have supported his firm belief in Divine Providence.

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